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WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM,
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA
AND RELATED INTOLERANCE
Preparatory Committee
First session
Geneva, 1 - 5 May 2000
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION FOR THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE AND THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Contribution*/ submitted by the International Save the Children Alliance

The Secretary-General has received the following contribution which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 March 2000]

*/ This contribution is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The International Save the Children Alliance would like to draw the attention of the Preparatory Committee to Resolution 1999/78 adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth session. In accordance with this resolution, the Commission recommends that "the particular situation of children should receive special attention during the preparations for and during the World Conference itself, especially in its outcome." Special attention during the "preparations" evidently refers to this meeting, other preparatory meetings, the future regional conferences, including the European Conference against Racism to be held in Strasbourg in October 2000.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a "child" as any person up to the age of 18. This includes not only small children, but also teenagers and persons who have nearly reached majority.

There are several good reasons why the participants at this meeting should focus their attention on children and young people.

First of all, young people have an inherent capacity to mobilise themselves against racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance. There are numerous positive examples demonstrating that young people are able to mobilise themselves against such trends, for instance "Touche pas à mon pôte" in France some years ago, "School without Racism" in the Netherlands and similar projects in other countries of the world. Positive examples have been documented by the Council of Europe's European Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance.

Secondly, young people are unfortunately a preferred target of recruitment to nazi and racist organisations - and are increasingly becoming so due to numerous web sites and distributors of music glorifying national-socialist ideology. There is a need to determine ways and means of preventing new recruitment and help young people who are already members to leave such organisations.

Thirdly, and most importantly, children are subject to racial discrimination just as adults are. In fact, they are more vulnerable than adults, since they often have difficulties making their opinions heard and views respected. When it comes to racial discrimination against children, Save the Children would like to draw the attention of the Preparatory Committee to the importance of considering the treatment and special situation of the following groups:

- Children of aliens;
- Children of indigenous peoples;
- Children who are stateless;
- Children who are illegally trafficked;
- Children who are separated from their parents;
- Children who are refugees/asylum-seekers;
- Children who reside illegally on the territory of state ("hidden children");
- Children of national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.

Concerning the latter group, the International Save the Children Alliance wishes to underline the importance of granting Roma/Sinti, Gypsy and Traveller children the fundamental right to education. This means adopting legislation and setting up education systems that meet the

needs of children, including the special needs of Roma/Sinti, Gypsy and Traveller children. The right to education of Roma/Sinti, Gypsy and Traveller children must be upheld in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination and the commitments laid down in the international human rights instruments. Roma/Sinti, Gypsy and Traveller children are entitled to equal opportunity in their access to education and throughout the whole learning process. This will ensure that Roma/Sinti, Gypsy and Traveller children are given the opportunity of reaching their full potential and that they do not suffer from discrimination in related areas. In order to achieve this goal, special measures may have to be adopted in relation to the teaching of their mother tongue and culture as provided for in various international and regional human rights legislation.

In conclusion, the International Save the Children Alliance suggests to include in the final documents and recommendations of this meeting a special reference to the Commission's resolution 1999/78 and a mention of the need to focus attention on the particular situation of children - including the opportunities, challenges and categories of children mentioned above - during the preparatory meetings, the future regional conferences and the World Conference itself, especially in its outcome.